

One Man's Policing Is Another Man's Liberating

By CHARLES POORE

THE LIMITS OF POWER: America's Role in the World. By Eugene J. McCarthy. 246 pages. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$5.95.

E B. WHITE once suggested that perhaps it would take a vicious menace from another planet to unite our divided and pugnacious world.

I remember Mr. White's paragraph trope from *The New Yorker* when I face each season's clamor of serious books on rugged world affairs. They want peace but they can't quite produce it. And with each author doing his thing, the lot presents fresh divisiveness and printed pugnacity. Chances are that no two—let alone no two dozen—eminent authorities wholly agree on what we must do to be saved.

Yet all books add something to what we should know. The useful ones honor clarity. Great stuff may lie buried in jabberwocky prose, but it's tough to unearth it there. A happy medium lies in "The Limits of Power: America's Role in the World," by Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, a Minnesota Democrat. Agree with him or not, he's clear, quick, and readable.

Adlai E. Stevenson was Mr. McCarthy's ideal. If this book has a personal mark, it's the mark he thinks Mr. Stevenson would have made on America's foreign policy—"had his ideas and attitudes been translated into political reality."

Advise More, Consent Less

Take the hypothesis and let the credit for it go. Here are some of Mr. McCarthy's elemental conclusions: First, the United States should work zealously through the best international agencies. Second, our great armament exports and the C.I.A. could use more Capitol Hill supervision. Third, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee—on which Mr. McCarthy serves—might well do more advising and less consenting.

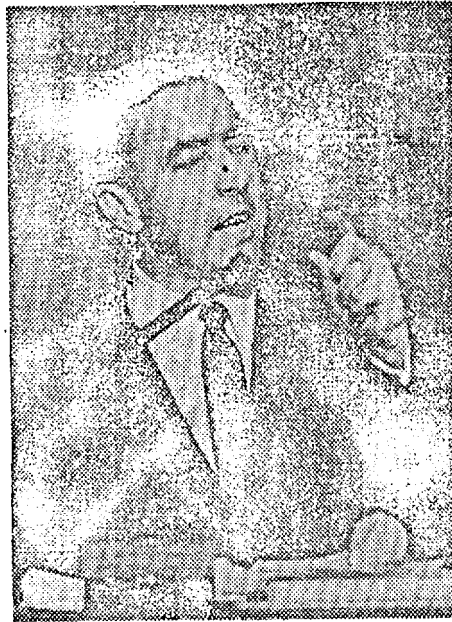
These principles seem generally Stevensonian, with the last a possible exception. At any rate, finding the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as well as the President and the State Department breathing harder down his neck at the United Nations would perhaps occasionally have troubled even Mr. Stevenson's urbane mind.

Now we're off to the all-too-human races. With Mr. McCarthy as our expert guide, we rush from the Middle East to the South Pacific, from South America to India.

The book's flow takes unpredictable courses, too. Not everyone would expect the dissertation on marketing the Dominican Republic's sugar crop, and little about the Soviet missile lunge in Cuba that included Mr. Stevenson's most famous hour of political reality.

Mr. McCarthy is as troubled as any of us by the Vietnamese tragedy. He's against the war, but he's not about to join either the victory-at-any-price or the peace-at-any-price logicians.

In Mr. McCarthy's rear-view mirroring, the changing perspectives time gives past problems stand out instructively. Retroactively, he's not against America's entry to the last two world wars. In those days, how-



Senator Eugene J. McCarthy

ever, eloquent voices were raised against our mixing into fights they called irrelevantly distant. Perhaps it was Thomas Jefferson who set a pattern for way out yonder ventures when he made the Mediterranean safe for Americans by fighting the Barbary pirates.

"A nation," Mr. McCarthy says, "has prestige according to its merits. America's contribution to world civilization must be more than a continuous performance demonstration that we can police the planet."

The rub, this book suggests, is that one man's policing is another man's blow for liberty. But we don't want E. B. White's parable of another planet policing us, or even liberating us, to come true.

End Papers

STINKING CREEK: The portrait of a Small Mountain Community. By John Fetterman. 192 pages. Dutton. \$5.95.

"I ain't drawin'." The words are Golden Slusher's—they mean that he is one of the few men along Stinking Creek, Kentucky, who doesn't survive by drawing welfare payments. "You can tell every time they have a battle," Frank Patterson said of the war in Vietnam as an airliner streaked over the raped mountains around the creek. "They fly over to where they're making those bombs in Tennessee." And from Preacher Marsee, who baptizes the children in the red acid creek: "Oh, my God, if an atomic bomb fell this morning, the only safe hiding place is in Jesus Christ. He would not fail, brother." John Fetterman talked to them, our fellow Americans, the hillbillies who live in the shacks along one creek in Appalachia. His book makes better reading than all the speeches by all the politicians who work in buildings with plumbing.

RICHARD REEVES

New York Times
18 October 1967